

Story 1919 (1992 Tape 3)

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A Laz¹ Alarm Clock

Cemal² once quarreled very bitterly with his wife. The difference of opinion between the two grew worse and worse until after awhile they no longer spoke to each other.

When Ramazan³ arrived, Cemal's friend, Temel,⁴ came

¹The word Laz referred originally to an ethnic minority living primarily in Trabzon and Rize provinces, along the extreme eastern part of the Turkish Black Sea coast. More recently the word has come to be applied to any resident of the entire Turkish Black Sea coast. In the Turkish oral tradition Laz people are stereotyped as being stupid or inept. This stereotype, like most others, is unjustifiable.

²In the Laz dialect the popular male name Kemal is pronounced Jemal, spelled Cemal in Turkish.

³Ramazan (pronounced Ramadan in most places outside Turkey) is the Muslim holy month. During Ramazan devout Muslims do not eat a morsel of food or swallow a drop of water in daylight hours.

⁴Temel (like Dursun) is a name given to so many Laz males that it automatically signals Laz to most Turkish audiences. Because Lazes are stereotyped as numskulls, the name Temel may, by extension, be applied to any stupid person, whether or not he happens to be Laz.

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to visit him. Temel asked, "With this lack of speech between you and your wife, how do you manage to wake up in time for sahur?"⁵

Cemal answered, "Oh, my wife wakes me up."

"Ah, but I thought that you and your wife were not speaking to each other. Is that not so?"

"Yes, that is so," said Cemal. "We still do not talk to each other, but we communicate in a different way. When the time for sahur is approaching, my wife lets the cat into my room."

Confused by this, Temel asked, "Does the cat tell you that it will soon be time for sahur?"

"No, of course not," answered Cemal, "but the dog sleeps in my bedroom."

⁵In order to survive and carry on their regular work during Ramazan, Muslims eat amply during the night. The fast is broken each day just after the sunset gun is fired with a ritual meal called iftar. They take their last nourishment in sahur, the meal that is served shortly before the firing of the sunrise gun.